

Message Text

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22

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SSM-03

OMB-01 SAM-01 IO-13 ACDA-07 OC-06 CCO-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 /100 W
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O P 271126Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1893

DIA WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PRIORITY

USCINCEUR VAHINGEN GER PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 7710

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: RENEWED FIGHTING IN LEBANON

1. VARIOUS LEBANESE RADIO STATIONS ANNOUNCED MORNING SEPT. 28 THAT A BATTLE BETWEEN SYRIAN/CHRISTIAN FORCES AND "CONBINED FORCES" (I.E. PALESTINIAN/LEBANESE LEFTIST) WAS GOING ON IN THE HIGH METN. BOTH SIDES ARE USING ARTILLERY AND ROCKETS AND AS OF 1200 HOURS, BATTLE WAS REPORTEDLY STILL GOING ON. TWO BEIRUT NEWSPAPERS HAD EARLIER REPORTED THAT SYRIAN FORCES IN SOKAR AREA HAD BEGUN TO MOVE.

2. EMBASSY DRIVERS WHO DEPARTED BEIRUT ABOUT 0700 SEP 28 ON UNCLASSIFIED POUCH RUN TO DAMASCUS WERE TURNED BACK AT FIRST SYRIAN CHECKPOINT NEAR SOFAR.
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SYRIAN OFFICER IN CHARGE, AFTER EXAMINING THEIR

DOCUMENTS, SAID THERE WAS TOO MUCH ARTILLERY FIRE IN AREA, AND THEY SHOULD "TRY AGAIN TOMORROW." DRIVERS REPORT THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE SHELLING BETWEEN LAST PLO/LEFTIST CHECKPOINT AT BHAMDOUN AND SYRIAN CHECKPOINT AT SOFAR, AND THEY WERE INFORMED THERE WAS ALSO HEAVY SHELLING AT DAHR AL BAYDAR. ALTHOUGH SYRIAN TROOPS AT SOFAR WERE IN INCREASED ALERT STATUS, THEY DID NOT APPEAR TO BE REINFORCED AND WERE NOT WEARING BATTLE GEAR. DRIVERS RETURNED TO CHANCERY WITHOUT INCIDENT.

3. WE UNDERSTAND BOTH CHRISTIAN GROUPS AND FATAH WENT ON ALERT STATUS NIGHT OF SEPT 27/28. AS OF 1200 HOURS, SEPT 28, THERE IS NO UNUSUAL MILITARY ACTIVITY IN EMBASSY AREA.

4. COMMENT: AT THIS POINT IT IS DIFFICULT TO SAY WHO STARTED THE FIGHTING, WHETHER IT IS PRELUDE TO MAJOR MILITARY MOVE OR SIMPLY SIGN OF NERVOUSNESS, OR WHETHER IT IS A FEINT TO COVER MORE CONCERTED ATTACK ELSEWHERE BY SYRIAN AND/OR CHRISTIAN FORCES. STATUS OF SYRIAN CHECKPOINT AS DESCRIBED BY OUR DRIVERS SUGGESTS SYRIANS IN THIS AREA AT LEAST WERE NOT IN READINESS FOR A MAJOR MILITARY OPERATION.
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